

**Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) and
Michigan Merit Examination (MME)
New Cut Scores FAQ**

1. What is a "cut score"?

Scores for all state assessments are reported in ranges called performance levels. Both MEAP and MME use four performance levels: Advanced, Proficient, Partially Proficient, and Not Proficient. A cut score is the point on the scale that separates one performance level from the next. Cut scores were approved by the State Board of Education.

2. Why were new cut scores established?

The new cut scores were established to ensure parents, students, and teachers are well informed about where students stand in terms of achieving success at the next level (the next grade, college, or technical career training). The new cut scores are being implemented now because students have had the full benefit of the rigorous Michigan Merit Curriculum for high school graduation and the updated Grade Level Content Expectations (GLCEs).

3. When do the new cut scores take effect?

The new cut scores apply to the 2011-2012 school year, so they will be applied for the first time to the fall 2011 MEAP administration.

4. Can we see how schools would have done had the new cut scores been in place previously?

Yes. These cut scores have been applied retroactively for informational purposes, and aggregate data files with the new cut scores applied can be downloaded now from the BAA Secure Site (www.michigan.gov/baa-secure). School, district, and state trends over the last four years can be viewed after November 3, 2011, at www.michigan.gov/mischooldata.

5. Will schools be held accountable for past performance using these new cut scores?

Past school accountability measures (such as Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) and EducationYES!) will NOT be retroactively calculated based on performance against the new cut scores. New school accountability measures (for the 2011-2012 school year and beyond) will be calculated using performance against the new cut scores.

6. Where can I find the new cut scores?

The new cut scores are now published on the MEAP and MME webpages in the "What's New?" section (www.michigan.gov/meap and www.michigan.gov/mme).

7. How different are the new cut scores from the old ones?

The new cut scores represent student achievement relative to being on-track to career- and college-readiness in high school, and on-track to proficiency in the next grade for grades 3-9, whereas the old cut scores represented a more basic level of achievement needed for the old manufacturing economy. As a result, the cut scores recently adopted are noticeably higher than the previous. The cut scores that were in effect prior to the adoption of these new cut scores can be accessed on the MEAP and MME webpages (links provided in #6).

8. *How can I compare the new cut scores to the old cut scores?*

As stated in #7, the cut scores used for the MEAP and MME prior to the 2011-2012 school year can be found on the MEAP and MME webpages. Additionally, the last four years of MEAP and MME data are being re-released with the new cut scores applied to give schools an opportunity to view student achievement and aggregate trends as if the scores had been in effect for the previous four years. Please see #4 for details about accessing this data.

9. *How many more questions does a student need to "get right" to achieve proficiency under the new cut scores?*

This differs depending on the grade and content area. Each grade and content area's test is of a differing level of difficulty, depending upon the difficulty of the test questions it contains.

10. *Which content areas and grades are affected by new cut scores?*

New cut scores were established for grades 3-8 in mathematics and reading, grades 5 and 8 for science, and grades 6 and 9 for social studies. Cut scores for the Michigan Merit Exam (grade 11) were changed in mathematics, reading, science, and social studies. Writing cut-scores were not changed because the MME cut scores already represented being on-track to career- and college-readiness, in that the MME writing cut score was already similar to the ACT writing college-ready benchmark. The new MEAP writing cut scores established in February 2011 were set to represent on-track to proficiency in the next tested grade.

11. *How were new cut scores established?*

The recommendations were the result of an intensive collaborative research study conducted by ACT, the National Center for Educational Achievement (NCEA) and the BAA Measurement Research and Psychometric unit with significant contributions from the BAA Technical Advisory Committee, Michigan's institutes of higher education, and others. The cut scores were officially established in September 2011 when the State Board of Education adopted the new cut score recommendations.

12. *For MEAP, why isn't there a high, mid, and low subcategory within each performance level like before?*

Performance level change is used to compare student performance from year to year, and applies only to MEAP reading and mathematics because these subjects are tested each year in grades 3 – 8. Using the old MEAP cut scores, each of the four performance levels was wide enough to have a high, mid, and low range reliably distinguishable within each performance level. This more precise categorization is useful for tracking performance level change because it allows for the detection of changes *within* a performance level, not just between performance levels. Applying the new, more rigorous cut scores, some of the performance levels are not wide enough to reliably distinguish between three ranges within the performance level. Because of this, a 9 x 9 transition table will be used (instead of the former 12 x 12) to track performance level change. The new MEAP cut scores, including the applicable subcategories for mathematics and reading, and the 9 x 9 transition table have been posted to the MEAP webpage (link provided in #6).

13. *What impact will the new cut scores have on AYP?*

Certainly, as the new scores are higher than the previously established performance standards, we expect to see a significant drop in statewide proficiency rates. This will result in lower proficiency rates at the local level as well. The Michigan Department of Education has applied to the United States Department of Education for a waiver of the 100% student proficiency target.